

**NOTE TO PROPERTY OWNERS IN LEHIGH ACRES  
AND OTHER AREAS OF SOUTHWEST FLORIDA:**

I have received a number of letters from Lehigh Acres property owners as a result of the public hearing and the newsletters/membership drive from the lot owners association. There seems to be some confusion about our Regulatory Permit Program, the Southwest Florida Environmental Impact Statement, and the Southwest Florida Ecosystem Restoration Study. These are three activities which might affect property in Southwest Florida including Lehigh Acres.

The first is our Regulatory permit program. Under the Clean Water Act, a permit from the Corps is needed to place fill material into wetlands and other waters. Some properties in Lehigh Acres contain wetlands and if wetlands are present, you need a permit from the Corps before building your house. If you plan to build within the next two years, please contact our Fort Myers office to arrange an inspection of your lot to determine if wetlands are present. The telephone number is 941-334-1975.

Second, we are conducting an Environmental Impact Statement to look at the future environmental impact if we continue to issue permits to fill wetlands in much of Lee and Collier Counties (see abstract below). For further information, call Bob Barron at 904-232-2203

The third activity that may impact properties in Southwest Florida is an ecosystem restoration study. This Southwest Florida Feasibility Study will examine potential problems and opportunities in the area. The potential non-Federal sponsor for this study is the South Florida Water Management District. This effort is an open process, with public input, which could recommend that the non-Federal sponsor obtain properties (at fair market value) for ecosystem restoration or other purposes. For further information on the Southwest Florida Study, please contact Frank Grant at 904 232-2186.

**UNIFORM RELOCATION ASSISTANCE AND  
REAL PROPERTY ACQUISITION ACT OF 1970**

(Public Law PL 91-646)

The purpose of PL 91-646 is to ensure that owners of real property to be acquired for Federal and Federally assisted projects are treated fairly and consistently and that persons displaced as a direct result of such acquisition will not suffer disproportionate injuries as a result of projects designed for the benefit of the public as a whole.

**DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

**ON**

**IMPROVING THE REGULATORY PROCESS IN SOUTHWEST FLORIDA**

**LEE and COLLIER COUNTIES, FLORIDA**

**JULY 1999**

**PREPARED BY**

**U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS**

**JACKSONVILLE DISTRICT**

**LEAD AGENCY**

**U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE**

**U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY**

**COOPERATING AGENCIES**

**ABSTRACT**

The study area consists of nearly one million acres comprising much of Lee and Collier Counties. This area is experiencing rapid growth and development. A number of valuable resources occur in the area including protected species, other fish and wildlife, wetlands, preserves, refuges, water supply, flood plain, shoreline, and other natural resources. Pressure for development has resulted in requests for permits from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to fill a substantial amount of wetlands in the study area. Based on data and maps from a Geographic Information System (GIS), the work of an Alternatives Development Group (ADG), water quality modeling, and other sources; we evaluated a number of predicted futures for the study area. The ADG consisted of a diverse group of stakeholders including proponents of development, agriculture, and conservation. Also represented were governmental officials at the Federal, state, and local level. The ADG met a number of times over a five-month period under the guidance of a professional and neutral facilitator. The ADG focused their efforts on developing alternatives and evaluating their effect. While the predicted futures were realistic possibilities, they varied from the more environmental friendly to pro development with minimum consideration of many environmental resources. This Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) examines five possible futures derived from the efforts of the ADG. This EIS discloses the criteria that if applied, would result in the different futures. In addition, it discusses the authorities of various regulatory agencies to affect the future. This EIS does not evaluate any specific permit action. This EIS does

not change any regulation or policy. However, the information developed will enable the Corps (and other agencies) to better evaluate the cumulative impacts of future permit decisions in the study area. Our goal is to make more efficient, timely, and appropriate permit decisions while balancing the demands of growth and development with protection of the environment.

For more information, contact Kenneth R. Dugger, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Planning Division, P.O. Box 4970, Jacksonville, Florida 32232-0019, phone (904) 232-1686 or facsimile 232-3442. You can also visit our web site at <http://www.saj.usace.army.mil/permit/swfeis/contents.htm>. Additional comments must be received in writing by [January 15, 2000].

EXCERPT FROM CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN FLORIDA PROJECT  
COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW STUDY

FINAL INTEGRATED FEASIBILITY REPORT AND PROGRAMMATIC  
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

### **9.7.2 Southwest Florida Feasibility Study**

The Caloosahatchee River is the only portion of the C&SF Project that lies in southwest Florida. The river serves as an outlet from Lake Okeechobee to the Gulf of Mexico and is the major source of surface water supply for the Lower West Coast region. It provides agricultural and lawn irrigation, public water supplies and is used to recharge shallow wellfields. The river also provides drainage for private drainage systems and local drainage districts.

The facilities included in the Comprehensive Plan for the Caloosahatchee River Basin will help meet the needs of the basin. However, there are additional water resources problems and opportunities in southwest Florida that require studies that are beyond the scope of the Comprehensive Plan. For example, primary water quality and hydrologic data do not exist for much of the region. This lack of information, assessments and monitoring data is a fundamental gap for this region of the state and greatly hinders its long-term water resources management opportunities.

The Southwest Florida Feasibility Study will include Collier, Lee, Charlotte, Glades, and Hendry Counties; and provide a framework to address the health of aquatic ecosystems; water flows; water quality (including appropriate pollution reduction targets), water supply; flood protection, wildlife, and biological diversity and natural habitat. The study will also investigate non-structural alternatives.

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